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### G88-869 Daylilies

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## Daylilies

**This guide offers hints on growing daylilies, discusses site selection, varieties, propagation and planting and plant culture.**

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*Debra Schwarze, Extension Assistant, hort*

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Daylilies, members of the Liliaceae (lily family), are some of the most tolerant and popular of the garden perennials. Their range in size, color, and use means that there is a daylily for almost everyone.

Like their name *Hemerocallis*, "beauty for a day", the individual daylily flower lasts only one day. However, a single plant may produce over 50 flowers. This large number of flowers can extend the blooming period of a plant for several weeks. With over 10,000 cultivars available and with periods of bloom available from very early to late in the season, daylilies can be blooming in a garden with the iris in the spring and continue through the fall chrysanthemums.



**Daylilies are some of the most tolerant and popular of the garden perennials. Here, "Audacity Bound."** (Photo courtesy Jim Shields, *The Daylily Place*)

The individual daylily flowers can range from 2 to 8 inches in diameter. They may have a single ring of petals or double rows. The petals may be overlapped, recurved, frilled, crinkled or ruffled. The bell-type flowers may be deep and trumpet-shaped or more shallow and cup-shaped.

Flower color can range from creamy-white to deep mahogany, with nearly every shade of yellow, orange and pink in between. There are also polychromes, with blends of related shades, and bi-color and eyed flowers that combine different hues. Many of these colors have been the result of extensive hybridization of this Asian native.

A wide range of heights is available in daylilies. There are tall types that can reach up to 5 feet, dwarf types from 12 to 24 inches with full-size flowers, and midgets having smaller flowers, finer foliage, and growing 12 to 18 inches in height. Any combination of height, color and flower type may be possible.

Daylilies can find numerous uses in the garden and landscape. They can be very dramatic in a perennial border or in the foreground of shrubbery plantings. They can be spectacular as foundation plantings,

cover an unsightly bank or serve as accents beside a pond. These flowers may be most effective when planted in sweeping drifts or masses. In this way they can add great amounts of color to a landscape naturalization project.

## Site Selection

Daylilies are able to withstand heat and drought better than many garden flowers. They are also completely winter hardy and have an excellent ability to survive floods and drought. Even with the ability to survive floods, they do not like waterlogged soils and require good drainage. Daylilies will grow well when planted on high banks near streams and ponds as well as in perennial borders and for naturalizing in less formal gardens. Low-growing types can be an excellent addition to rock gardens.



*"Rose Prelude." (Photo courtesy Jim Shields, The Daylily Place)*

While tolerant of most soil types, daylilies will grow best in a well drained, sandy loam. Less than ideal soils can be amended with compost, manure or other organic matter mixed into the top 12 to 18 inches of soil. Generally, any soil that will grow good vegetables will grow excellent daylilies.

Select a location providing full sun or with some afternoon shade, especially in hot areas. The flowers of some of the newer cultivars may have a tendency to fade or wilt when grown in a full sun location. These cultivars are at their best when grown in a location receiving partial shade.

## Propagation and Planting

Daylilies are very easily propagated by the division of old clumps. Clumps should be divided when they become overcrowded, usually every 4 to 6 years. For very vigorous cultivars, division may need to be more often. The most favorable time for dividing old clumps and resetting divisions or new plants is from late summer to late autumn. Planting may also be done in the very early spring.

**Figure 1. By thrusting two spading forks into the clump, back to back, and using the forks as levers, the roots may pry apart more easily.**

When dividing daylilies, the plant should be lifted from the soil with a spading fork. The thickly intertwined roots of daylilies often must be forcibly separated. Thrust 2 spading forks, back to back, into the clump and, using the handles of the forks as levers, pry the roots apart (*Figure 1*).

When planting divisions, or newly purchased plants, the hole needs to be large enough to allow the roots to spread out. A small cone of soil should be made in the center of the hole, and the division placed on top with the roots fanned outward and downward. Carefully work the soil in around the roots. The crown should be set not more than an inch or so below the soil surface. Tall cultivars should be spaced 24 to 30 inches apart with smaller types 18 to 24 inches apart.



By using a mulch, weed competition can be reduced. Stray weeds should be pulled out. Keep the young

divisions watered, especially during dry spells.

## Culture

The daylilies are one of the most adaptable and self-sufficient flowers ever planted in the garden. Few perennials are less exacting in their demands or require less care. They have practically no pest or disease problems.

Daylilies thrive and bloom on a very meager diet. The plants require little cultivation since the plant foliage nearly completely shades the ground around it. The clumps will benefit from being lifted, divided and replanted every few years, but if that is not possible, the plants will continue to grow with a somewhat less abundant bloom.

Even with all of their toughness, daylilies may benefit from occasional waterings during the growing season, especially during dry periods. While most of the stems are strong and supple, occasionally a weak plant may benefit from staking.

Daylilies grow so easily, with so little care, that one problem may be difficulty in getting rid of some of the more vigorous cultivars.

For more information about about daylilies, try these websites...

*Daylilies Online*  
*Friends of the Daylilies*

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